

I rise in strong support of the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act, H.R. 3961, legislation that would ensure that physicians are reimbursed fairly for treating Medicare patients. Improving this payment system is vital to improving our Nation's health insurance system.

There is broad consensus that the current Medicare formula for reimbursing physicians, the Sustainable Growth Rate, SGR, is fundamentally flawed. This formula would be eliminated by this bill and replaced with a better structure for Medicare physician payments. Without this necessary action, doctors' payments would be cut 21 percent in 2010, forcing many doctors to stop accepting Medicare patients and undermining the ability of millions of Medicare beneficiaries to get the care they need to stay healthy. I am pleased that this new formula would compensate physicians fairly for their services to seniors.

As a U.S. Representative and the spouse of a physician, I have heard from many physicians, nurses, and other health care providers frustrated with the annual ritual of preventing major Medicare physician payment cuts. I am pleased that this legislation, a crucial part of health care reform, would stop this cycle and reset the Medicare physician payment baseline to ensure seniors continue to have access to their doctors. In addition, this bill recognizes the importance of primary care, a key component of health reform, and would provide seniors with greater access to primary care practitioners. This would help seniors with greater coordination of their medical care and promote medical care that keeps seniors healthy.

Additionally, the legislation we are considering today would require all new spending to be paid for and not increase the debt by instituting pay-as-you-go budgeting as law. I support pay-as-you-go rules because fiscal discipline must always be a hallmark of our government. In the 1990s with pay-as-you-go as the law, we turned the massive deficits of the 1980s into a record surplus under President Clinton. Pay-as-you-go is only one tool, but it is a strong one to return our Nation back to fiscal stability.

I voted in favor of this bill to help physicians and health care providers continue to provide excellent service to our nation's seniors.